

**Championing every care-experienced child's right to
an Independent Visitor**



**Open letter to Chairs of Corporate Parenting Panels and Children and Young People's
Committees**

26th February 2021

The **National Independent Visitor Network** (ivnetwork.org.uk) is writing to all Chairs of Corporate Parenting Panels and committees that provide leadership and scrutiny to corporate parenting.

We wish to ensure that panel and committee members are aware of the statutory duty placed on Local Authorities to make Independent Visitors (IVs) accessible to their children in care.

All Corporate Parenting Panels are responsible for reviewing and monitoring the provision of services for children in care within their own Local Authority (LA). This includes reviewing and monitoring IV provision and ensuring that statutory responsibilities are being met and children in care are receiving the support they are entitled to.

A recent Freedom of Information request showed that access to IV is a postcode lottery, with some LA's having a very limited IV provision or no service at all (ivnetwork.org.uk/national-independent-visitors-data-report-2019).

NIVN are contacting you to request your support to review and improve access to this vital statutory service in your LA. We kindly request you ask the following questions at your next Corporate Parenting Panel or committee meeting. The NIVN Project Team is available to provide support to help you develop your IV scheme:

1. Duty was imposed by The Children Act 1989 and then expanded in the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, for the provision of Independent Visitors for children who are looked after. Does your LA have an IV provision? If not, are you aware of the reasons for this?
2. NIVN is campaigning to achieve a minimum 10% access rate of eligible children nationwide, that is adequately resourced. We hope you will join us to support the *Right Friend* campaign vision. Access to and resourcing of IV services varies considerably around the country and impacts on capacity to achieve this vision and make a positive impact on the lives of looked after children and young people.
Are you aware what percentage of your eligible children in care are matched with an IV?
Are you aware of the value this service has given to them?
3. Do your panel or committee members and your Children in Care Council know everything they should about IVs and IV entitlement? We recommend you visit:
<https://ivnetwork.org.uk/national-standards/>.

4. Who is running your scheme and is this provision working well and following the National IV Standards? (IV schemes are run in-house or contracted out with some LAs spot purchasing).
5. Is IV provision on your panel/committee agenda at least once a year? Does your LA receive an annual report from your IV service? This will help you ensure that children in care in your area are getting the support they are entitled to.
6. Do you have an action plan to ensure that your IV service in your area is well run, adequately funded and has sufficient capacity to ensure no child misses out?
7. An NIVN campaign objective is to extend statutory provision of IV beyond 18 to 25-years, to reduce social isolation and build a positive pathway to independent adulthood. There are many examples of good practice in relation to continued and new IV relationships for care leavers, in line with the Children and Social Work Act 2017 corporate parenting principles. Are you aware of an IV offer to care leavers in your LA?

Thank you for your help in reviewing and addressing this important responsibility on behalf of your Local Authority. Please contact the NIVN if you would like any further information or support to develop your IV scheme further.

NIVN Project Team, Hosted by Barnardo's

ivnetwork@barnardos.org.uk

ivnetwork.org.uk

<https://ivnetwork.org.uk/national-standards/>